

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT



Application No. 12945, of the Sidwell Friends School, pursuant to Sub-section 8207.2 of the Zoning Regulations, for a special exception under Paragraph 3101.42 to allow the construction of a gymnasium, art center and a maintenance building as additions to a private school in an R-1-B District at the premises 3825 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W. (Square 1825, Lot 816).

HEARING DATE: May 23, 1979  
DECISION DATE: June 6, 1979

FINDINGS OF FACT:

1. The subject site is the campus of the Sidwell Friends School, which is located on the east side of Wisconsin Avenue, N.W. north of Quebec Street, N.W., in the R-1-B District and is known as 3825 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.
2. The subject site is the home of the Sidwell Friends School. It is improved with the Zartman House built in 1820, which functions as the administrative building, a maintenance building, an activities building, the Upper School Library, the Upper School Classroom building, the Sensner Building used for science instruction and creative arts, the Xavitz Middle School Building, nine tennis courts and three athletic fields.
3. The subject site contains approximately 14.9 acres of land.
4. The properties to the north of Sidwell include a commercial building, occupied by the Capitol Radio Engineering Institute, a Post Office Building and the Washington Home. To the east, across 37th Street is the Phoebe Hearst Elementary School and playfields. On Quebec Street to the South, there are three private residences and a commercial building occupied by the Association for Childhood Education International. Across Wisconsin Avenue is McLean Gardens and an office building occupied by the Federal National Mortgage Association.

5. Metro bus stops are located on the east and west sides of Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., directly in front of the school.

6. A Metro rail station is under construction at Tenley Circle within four blocks of the subject site.

7. The applicant proposes to construct a new gymnasium, an arts center and an addition to the Sensner Building. The new gymnasium will be used for physical education classes, team sport practice sessions and will have locker rooms for visiting teams. The school nurse's office will also be located in the gymnasium. No permanent seating will be provided in this facility. The proposed arts center will be physically linked to the present activities building. The arts center will have a 450 seat auditorium with a stage, a scenery construction workshop and a Friends Meeting for Worship room. There will also be art studios, photographic dark rooms, choral and individual practice rooms, storage rooms for costumes and classrooms. The addition to the Sensner Building will permit consolidation of the school's maintenance department and provide a location for the student stationery store. All maintenance will be done indoors in the new building, and many minor maintenance buildings will be eliminated from the campus.

8. No new access points, driveways or curb cuts are required to serve the new facilities. The present access points are the circular drive in front of Zartman House at 3825 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., and the entrance to the Upper School at 3901 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W. An additional egress point is a drive shared with the McGraw Hill Institute, by right of an easement granted by the Washington Home to establish a fifteen foot alley about 297 feet long as an egress to Wisconsin Avenue.

9. As part of the proposed expansion of the school's facilities the number of on-campus parking spaces will be increased from 110 spaces to 145 spaces.

10. The school has 700 students, 100 full or part-time teachers and thirty staff persons including administrators, clerical, food service, cleaners and bus drivers.

11. The proposed construction will not provide for any increase in the present school enrollment. The applicant's Board of Trustees has made a formal determination not to enlarge the enrollment of the school at this location.

12. The academic day at the school runs from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Athletic activities and programs are conducted from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Evening activities include seminars for Upper School students of approximately forty to forty-five students, occasional concerts and student dramatic productions and basketball games. These evening events conclude by 10:30 p.m.

13. The building materials to be used in the proposed new structures will be brick and stone. These materials have been selected to match Zartman House and other existing structures on the campus.

14. The North Cleveland Park Citizens Association, by letter of June 6, 1979, had no opposition to the application on the grounds that the applicant had met with them and they were assured that the student population will not be increased.

15. A representative of the McLean Gardens Residents Association testified at the public hearing for the purpose of clarification by the applicant of concerns of the association. The concerns were (a) Parking by some students in the area surrounded by McLean Gardens so as to preempt street spaces for the tenants; (b) Any further increase of students and faculty and (c) The use of the tennis courts by persons other than the students and faculty and the lighting and hours of the tennis courts.

As to those concerns the Board notes that the parking is unreserved on-street parking over which the Board has no control. The enrollment shall be fixed by the Board hereinafter conditioned. The tennis courts will be used by neighboring residents when not required by the students and faculty, but there will be no lighting for the tennis courts since the use of the courts will be terminated prior to dusk.

16. Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3C, did not testify at the public hearing. By letter of May 12, 1979, the ANC requested the Board to keep the record open so that it could submit its' recommendations prior to the time the Board decided the application. By letter of May 29, 1979, the ANC made the following recommendations:

- a. The subject population at the subject location should be limited to 700 students.

- b. No lighting should be provided to the existing or proposed outdoor tennis courts.
- c. A policy of equal access should be required for use of the tennis facilities for both neighborhood residents and new members of the applicant's tennis club.
- d. No bleachers or other seats should be installed in the proposed gymnasium. The applicant agreed to this at the May 29th meeting of the ANC.
- e. There should be no conjoint operations of spectator events in the existing gymnasium and the proposed auditorium.
- f. Bus parking should be limited to those bases substantially serving the subject property and not applicant's school in Bethesda. The applicant agreed to this at the May 29th meeting of the ANC.

17. The Board is required by statute to give great weight to the issues and concerns of the ANC expressed in writing. In addressing these concerns, the Board states as follows:

- a. The Board's limitation of 700 students will be listed as a condition to the granting of the application.
- b. The applicant has testified that no lighting will be provided for the tennis courts.
- c. The granting of any tennis privileges to other than school parties is a personal matter of the applicant. The Board cannot dictate it. It has no jurisdiction.
- d. The applicant has testified that it will not provide permanent seating for the proposed gymnasium.
- e. While the Board understands the concerns about crowds which conjoint operations may occasion, the Board notes that school functions to be held in a gymnasium are not synonymous with auditorium functions. The Board finds the request of the ANC to be an unreasonable request. The Board will not interfere in this type of an administrative function of the applicant.

- f. As stated by the ANC the applicant agreed to limit his parking.

18. There was no opposition to the application, neither at the public hearing or of record.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Based on the record, the Board concludes that the applicant is seeking a special exception. The record reflects, and the Board concludes that the applicant has substantially complied with the requirements of Paragraph 3101.42 of the Zoning Regulations. In so concluding, the Board has determined that the proposed new structures and addition to an existing structure will enable the applicant to provide a broader range of academic and athletic programs to its students. The new facilities are not likely to be objectionable to adjoining and nearby property because of noise, traffic, number of students or otherwise objectionable conditions. The proposed new construction will be located near existing structures so that the open space and grounds of the campus will be relatively undisturbed. There are no traffic impacts or other impacts which will be to the detriment of nearby or other property owners. Building materials have been selected which are compatible with the existing structures. The new facilities are designed for the use of the students, faculty and staff of the school. Ample parking spaces will be provided to accommodate the students, teachers, staff and visitors likely to come to the site by automobile, and the campus is well-served by public transportation. The present enrollment of students and number of faculty and staff will not be increased. Accordingly, it is ORDERED that the application is GRANTED SUBJECT to the following CONDITIONS:

1. Approval is limited to the Sidwell Friends School
2. Enrollment shall be limited to 700 students, 100 faculty and thirty staff.
3. The applicant shall provide 145 parking spaces as shown on Exhibit No. 29 of the record.

VOTE: 3-0 (Charles R. Norris, John G. Parsons and Chloethiel Woodard Smith to GRANT, William F. McIntosh and Leonard L. McCants not voting, not having heard the case).

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BY ORDER OF THE D.C. BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT

ATTESTED BY:   
STEVEN E. SHER  
Executive Director

FINAL DATE OF ORDER: 7 AUG 1979

UNDER SUB-SECTION 8204.3 OF THE ZONING REGULATIONS "NO DECISION OR ORDER OF THE BOARD SHALL TAKE EFFECT UNTIL TEN DAYS AFTER HAVING BECOME FINAL PURSUANT TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL RULES OF PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE BEFORE THE BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT."

THIS ORDER OF THE BOARD IS VALID FOR A PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS AFTER THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS ORDER, UNLESS WITHIN SUCH PERIOD AN APPLICATION FOR A BUILDING PERMIT OR CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY IS FILED WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF LICENSES, INVESTIGATIONS, AND INSPECTIONS.